

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2903

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 0233

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BM, TH

SUBJ: THAI FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT RANGOON

REFS: (A) BANGKOK 1655, (B) VIENTIANE 0117, (C) 75 RANGOON 4184

1. THE BURMESE AND THAI SHOULD FIND A LOT TO TALK ABOUT DURING THE FORTHCOMING VISIT OF FOREIGN MINISTER UPPADIT AND GENERAL KRIANGSAK. THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT AGENDA ITEMS ARE LIKELY TO BE:

A. BORDER PROBLEMS. THE LONG, RUGGED, AND OFTEN ILL-DEFINED BOUNDARY HAS BEEN A TRADITIONAL SOURCE OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE IS THE JANUARY 18-19 INCURSION INTO THAILAND BY BURMA ARMY ELEMENTS CONDUCTING OPERATIONS AGAINST THE SHAN UNITED ARMY NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING/INSURGENT ORGANIZATION. THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM, IN GUB EYES, IS THE RTG'S LONGSTANDING POLICY OF PROVIDING REFUGE AND OTHER FORMS OF ASSISTANCE TO ANTI-GUB INSURGENTS, INCLUDING MAJOR NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING FORMATIONS SUCH AS THE SUA. CIF, ETC. UNTIL THIS PROBLEM IS RESOLVED, FUNDAMENTAL

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IMPROVEMENT IN BURMA-THAILAND RELATIONS IS UNLIKELY.

B. FISHING DISPUTES. ANOTHER LONGSTANDING BILATERAL PROBLEM IS POACHING BY THAI FISHING BOATS IN RICH BURMESE COASTAL WATERS, AND THE CONSEQUENT SEIZURE OF THESE BOATS AND THEIR CREWS BY THE BURMA NAVY. THAI CHARGE PRADEEP SOCHIRATNA HAS TOLD US THAT THE RTG WILL BE SEEKING

SOME SORT OF LEGAL ACCESS TO BURMESE COASTAL WATERS, PERHAPS INVOLVING A JOINT VENTURE. EVEN THOUGH THE BURMESE ARE UNABLE TO PATROL THEIR TERRITORIAL WATERS SUFFICIENTLY TO PREVENT POACHING, AND IT WOULD BE IN THEIR INTEREST TO HAVE SOME METHOD OF TAXING OR OTHERWISE SHARING IN THE PROFITS OF THE CURRENTLY ILLEGAL FISHING OPERATIONS, THAI COOPERATION IN ENDING SUPPORT OF THE ANTI-GUB INSURGENTS WOULD PROBABLY BE DEMANDED BY THE BURMESE AS A PRIOR CONDITION TO A COOPERATIVE FISHING AGREEMENT.

2. EVEN THOUGH THE VISIT FOLLOWS CLOSELY THE STATE VISIT BY LAO PRESIDENT SOUPHANOUVONG, WE SEE NO PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE IN THE TIMING. SPECIFICALLY, WE DOUBT THAT BURMA WOULD PLAY AN INTERMEDIARY ROLE BETWEEN THAILAND AND LAOS, ALTHOUGH, AS NOTED IN REF B, SOME PEOPLE MIGHT BE INCLINED TO SPECULATE ALONG THESE LINES, AND THE BURMESE MIGHT TRY TO CONVEY TO THE THAI THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY HAVE SOME SPECIAL INFLUENCE WITH THE LAO.
OSBORN

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